

enough to know these two gifted individuals, we remember them for their energy, their compassion for others, and realize that the world is better off for their time on this earth.●

HOOSIERS TEACH IMPORTANCE OF GEOGRAPHY

● Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I rise before you today to recognize two excellent high school teachers who have been chosen by the National Geographic Society to represent the State of Indiana in the promotion of Geography Awareness Week.

I wish to commend Christine Bullock of Walkerton, Indiana and Kevin Leineweber of Lafayette, Indiana for their efforts in advancing Geography Awareness Week throughout Indiana.

Ms. Bullock and Mr. Leineweber visited our nation's capital for three weeks this summer to study methods for improving geographic education in our schools. They have set themselves apart as Hoosier leaders who understand that geography should be an integral part of American education.

Geography offers a unique perspective in understanding ourselves, our relationship to the Earth and its resources and our interdependence with other people of the world. With an ever expanding global network of trading partners, the United States must look to its future entrepreneurs and citizens to have an understanding of the world and its geography in order to promote American interests abroad.

I urge all teachers to stress to their students the importance of geography, and I appeal to students to study geography and its effects on the makeup of our global societies.

I extend my congratulations to Ms. Bullock and Mr. Leineweber for recognizing the importance of geography and working toward the development of geographic knowledge in our communities and schools.●

NURSING HOME PATIENT PROTECTION ACT

● Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the Nursing Home Patient Protection Act. I wish this legislation was not necessary, but it is. It is necessary and we must pass this bill because senior citizens and people with disabilities are being cruelly forced to leave their homes. Why? Not because of some failure of their own, not because they haven't spent their lives working hard, and not because they deserve to be kicked out for any other reason. These people, mostly senior citizens, are being told to leave their homes because of inadequacies in our Medicaid program. This is not right, Mr. President. It is unfair, unacceptable, and Un-American to sit by while many of our senior citizens are shuffled around like a deck of cards. I think honoring your mother and father is not just good practice—it is good public policy.

Most seniors begin paying their nursing home bills with their own life's sav-

ings. Later, when they run out of money, they typically enter the Medical Assistance Program. All too often, nursing homes then tell these residents, some of whom have lived in a home for 20 years or more, that they must leave because Medicaid payment rates are too low. No warning is given, and little assistance for relocation is available. They are, quite literally, left out on the street to find another facility on their own. Think of your parents in a similar situation: their health is not what it once was, they are accustomed to their current surroundings, and they were promised by their nursing home that they would be allowed to stay when they ran out of money and became Medicaid recipients. Then, without any warning, they are told that they must leave what has been their home within the next two months. How would you react? I know how I would react—with anger, fear, and disbelief. It is wrong and dangerous to disrupt seniors in such a manner. Getting adjusted to a new environment is difficult at any age, but for seniors, the added stress is often enough to significantly diminish their health, leading to additional medical problems, and even premature death.

This bill does not attempt to force nursing homes to accept Medicaid patients. Rather, it recognizes the fact that nursing homes should have the right to take only "private pay" patients if they so choose. That is the nature of the marketplace.

This bill does require nursing homes to be honest about their policies concerning Medicaid and ensures that patients are not misled. This bill would require nursing homes to formally notify potential residents of their policy regarding Medicaid. Furthermore, under this legislation, if a nursing home converts to private pay only status, it must still honor its previous promise to current residents and accept their Medicaid payments.

Senior citizens' advocacy groups strongly support this legislation. As noteworthy, the nursing home industry supports the bill. Calling it "intelligent public policy," the American Health Care Association, which represents over 11,000 nursing homes, acknowledges the fact that no one should be lied to and kicked out of their homes. Nursing home officials realize, as we do, that this bill will not damage the economic viability of running a nursing home. It will simply give seniors the security of knowing they will not be suddenly forced to leave their homes when they run out of their own savings.

I also want to say a bit about the last section of the bill. The final section is crucial because it requires the Secretary of HHS to examine Medicaid reimbursement rates and make sure they are reasonable. This work will then be compiled and submitted to Congress within five years after the bill's passage. Hopefully, this report will shed light on the Medicaid system's prob-

lems and initiate the process of correcting them.

This legislation will provide some much needed security for our seniors. I hope it will also start the process of improving our Medicaid system. People on Medicaid are regularly denied services by nursing homes and hospitals because the reimbursement rates are unreasonably low. The Secretary's report, required by this bill, is a step in the right direction.

In closing, I would like to thank Senator GRAHAM for introducing this important legislation. I know that he sincerely shares my concern for the well-being of older Americans, as do all of the bill's cosponsors. We have a responsibility to make sure that Americans are treated fairly and humanely. This bill does just that. Let's take care of our parents, our grandparents, and ourselves by passing this important legislation.●

TRIBUTE TO AUBREY "COTTON" LAKE

● Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Aubrey "Cotton" Lake, a long-time friend and respected member of the Tuscaloosa community, who passed away on Friday, August 14, 1998 at the age of 69.

Aubrey was a valued employee of the Tuscaloosa News for 18 years and traveled extensively with the Alabama Crimson Tide football team. His photographs of the team won him the coveted Look Magazine National Sports Photography award, and many of his photographs hang in Tuscaloosa's Coach Bear Bryant Museum. Aubrey captured many of the Crimson Tide images that have become emblazoned on our memories—from photographs of Bear Bryant coaching the team to victory, to Joe Namath before his tenure with the NFL. Aubrey was there, documenting sports history, shooting and selecting the most descriptive photographs for the next day's Tuscaloosa News sports page.

Aubrey was more than a sports photographer, however, and served both God and country throughout his life. In addition to his active membership at the First Freewill Baptist Church of Tuscaloosa, he also served many of Alabama's elected officials. For more than 24 years, Aubrey worked for late Representatives Walter Flowers and Claude Harris, and most recently for me, on my own staff.

More than just an employee, Aubrey was a friend and a confidant. He was loyal, had a lifetime of experience in Alabama, and was a true servant to the people of our state. I could never have asked for a more dedicated staff member or friend.

After leaving public service, Aubrey worked as president of Tuscaloosa Insulation Company, and served as a member of the Tuscaloosa Home Builders Association. He was an avid sportsman, and attended as many Alabama football games as possible.